CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. An equipment housing comprising:

a back box having opposing side walls and top and bottom walls, said opposing side walls and said top and bottom walls defining a frontal opening;

a front enclosure including a front panel, said front panel having a first horizontal axis and a vertical axis passing through a plane defined by said front panel, said front enclosure being pivotably coupled to said back box; and

at least one generally rectangular frontal portion intersecting said front panel along a line generally parallel to said horizontal axis, said frontal portion intersecting said front panel at a predetermined angle in a first frontal portion position, said frontal portion having an upper edge spaced from said front panel by a first distance at said first frontal portion position to form an opening between said upper edge and said front panel.

2. The equipment housing of claim 1 further including at least one of a system control panel and a visual display screen mounted to said front panel.

3. The equipment housing of claim 2 wherein said at least one of said system control panel and said visual display is mounted behind said front panel and said front panel includes an opening sized and positioned to allow the viewing of said at least one of said system control panel and a visual display mounted to said front panel behind said opening.

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4. The equipment housing of claim 2 wherein said at least one of said system control panel and said visual display screen is mounted to the front of said front panel.

5. The equipment housing of claim 2 wherein said system control panel comprises at least one of a touch screen, a pen-based input panel and a visual display screen.

6. The equipment housing of claim 1 further including at least one piece of electronic equipment having an equipment control panel, said at least one piece of electronic equipment being mounted to said front enclosure with said equipment control panel accessible through said opening between said upper edge of said frontal portion and said front panel.

7. The equipment housing of claim 6 wherein said electronic equipment includes at least one of a compact disk player, a compact disk player/recorder, a DVD player, a DVD player/recorder, a video player, a video player/recorder, an audio player, an audio player/recorder, an AM/FM tuner, a TV tuner, an audio mixer, an audio router, a personal computer, an audiovisual switcher, an audiovisual router, a telecommunications hub, a data hub, and a telecommunications switch.

8. The equipment housing of claim 6 wherein said first distance is specified such that said equipment control panel is accessible through said opening between said upper edge of said frontal portion and said front panel when said electronic equipment is mounted to said front enclosure.

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9. The equipment housing of claim 1 wherein said front enclosure is pivotally connected to said back box with a hinge to permit rotation of said front panel around an axis parallel to said vertical axis.

10. The equipment housing of claim 9 wherein said hinge is a piano hinge.

11. The equipment housing of claim 8 wherein said hinge comprises at least two hinges each having first and second detachable hinges.

12. The equipment housing of claim 11 wherein said at least two hinges are pintel hinges.

13. The equipment housing of claim 1 further including an electronic equipment rack mounted behind said front panel.

14. The equipment housing of claim 1 further including at least one electronic equipment rack mounted to said front enclosure such that said equipment rack is accessible through said opening between said upper edge of said frontal portion and said front panel.

15. The equipment housing of claim 1 wherein the distance between said opposing side walls is less than or equal to 30.5 inches.

16. The equipment housing of claim 1 wherein said back box has a width and a depth wherein the ratio of the width to the depth is greater than 3.0.

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17. The equipment housing of claim 1 wherein said back box has a peripheral front edge extending along said side walls, said top wall and said bottom wall, said peripheral front edge defining a front edge plane, and said back box including a lip extending outward along at least a portion of said peripheral front edge within said front edge plane.

18. The equipment housing of claim 1 further including a pivot mechanism configured to permit pivotal rotation of said frontal portion around a second horizontal axis parallel to said first horizontal axis so as to permit said first distance to be varied as a result of the pivotal rotation of said frontal portion with respect to said front panel.

19. The equipment housing of claim 18 wherein said pivot mechanism includes a pair of pivot pins.

20. The equipment housing of claim 18 wherein said pivot mechanism includes a first hinge.

21. The equipment housing of claim 18 further including at least one mechanical stop operative to permit said frontal portion to be movably engaged at at least one predetermined rotational position with respect to said front panel.

22. The equipment housing of claim 18 wherein said at least one frontal portion is rotatable between a closed position in which said frontal portion is substantially vertical and parallel to said front panel and said first frontal portion position.

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23. The equipment housing of claim 18 wherein said at least one frontal portion is rotatable to and positionable at a closed position in which said frontal portion is substantially vertical and parallel to said front panel, said first frontal portion position and a second substantially horizontal frontal portion position in which said frontal portion is generally horizontal and perpendicular to said front panel.

24. The equipment housing of claim 18 further including at least one of a system control panel and a visual display screen mounted to said front panel.

25. The equipment housing of claim 24 wherein said at least one of said system control panel and said visual display is mounted behind said front panel and said front panel includes an opening sized and positioned to allow the viewing of said at least one of said system control panel and a visual display mounted to said front panel behind said opening.

26. The equipment housing of claim 24 wherein said at least one of said system control panel and said visual display screen is mounted to the front of said front panel.

27. The equipment housing of claim 24 wherein said system control panel comprises at least one of a touch screen, a pen-based input panel and a visual display screen.

28. The equipment housing of claim 18 further including at least one piece of electronic equipment having an equipment control panel, said at least one piece of electronic equipment

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being mounted to said front enclosure such that said equipment control panel is accessible through said opening between the upper edge of said frontal portion and said front panel.

29. The equipment housing of claim 28 wherein said at least one piece of electronic equipment includes at least one of a compact disk player, a compact disk player/recorder, a CD-Rom, a DVD player, a DVD player/recorder, a video player, a video player/recorder, an audio player, an audio player/recorder, an AM/FM tuner, a TV tuner, an audio mixer, an audio router, a personal computer, an audiovisual switcher, an audiovisual router, a telecommunications hub, a data hub, and a telecommunications switch.

30. The equipment housing of claim 28 wherein said first distance is specified such that said equipment control panel is accessible through said opening between said upper edge of said frontal portion and said front panel when said at least one piece of electronic equipment is mounted to said front enclosure.

31. The equipment housing of claim 18 wherein said front enclosure is pivotally coupled to said back box to permit rotation of said front panel around an axis parallel to said vertical axis.

32. The equipment housing of claim 31 wherein said front enclosure is pivotally coupled to said back box with a piano hinge.

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33. The equipment housing of claim 18 wherein said front enclosure is removably coupled to said back box with at least two detachable hinges.

34. The equipment housing of claim 33 wherein said detachable hinges are pintel hinges.

35. The equipment housing of claim 18 further including an electronic equipment rack mounted to the rear surface of said front panel.

36. The equipment housing of claim 18 further including an electronic equipment rack mounted to said front enclosure such that said equipment rack is accessible through said opening between said upper edge of said frontal portion and said front panel when said frontal portion is positioned at said first frontal portion position.

37. The equipment housing of claim 18 wherein the distance between said opposing side walls is less than or equal to 30.5 inches.

38. The equipment housing of claim 18 wherein said back box has a width and a depth wherein the ratio of the width to the depth is greater than 3.0.

39. The equipment housing of claim 17 wherein said back box has a peripheral front edge extending along said side walls, said top wall and said bottom wall, said peripheral front edge defining a front edge plane, said back box including a lip

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extending outward along at least a portion of said peripheral front edge within said front edge plane.

40. A method for installing an electronic equipment enclosure comprising the steps of:

framing a wall area to provide an opening within the framing of a predetermined height and width;

mounting a back box of a predetermined height and width less than said opening height and width respectively, within said opening said framing, wherein said back box includes a first pair of detachable hinge portions affixed to the back box; and

pivotably coupling a front enclosure having a second pair of detachable hinge portions affixed to said front enclosure to said back box by engaging said second hinge portions with said first hinge portions to permit pivotal rotation of said front enclosure with respect to said back box.

41. The method of claim 40 further including the step of mounting at least one piece of electronic equipment to said front enclosure prior to said pivotably coupling step.

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